

Message Text

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47

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

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R 221202Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7391

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L BIERUT 14495

KUWAIT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, LE

SUBJ: KAMAL JUMBLATT'S REFORM PROGRAM: AN ASSESSEMENT

1. SUMMARY. JUMBLATT'S TENDENCY TO UTTER SHARP CRITICISMS OF RIGHTISTS AND THE PRESENCE OF EXTREMISTS IN HIS LEFTIST FRONT GIVE HIM A REPUTATION AS A RADICAL. THOUGH PERHAPS DESERVED IN PART, THIS IMAGE IS BELIVED BY THE GENERALLY MODERATE CONTENT OF HIS POLITICAL REFORM PROGRAM. END SUMMARY.

2. KAMAL JUMBLATT'S REPUTATION AS A RADICAL LEFTIST IS PERHAPS DESERVED IF ONE LOOKS SOLELY AT THE COMPANY HE KEEPS AMONG EXTREMISTS OR AT HIS PENCHANT FOR SHARP CRITICISMS OF POLITICAL FIGURES ON THE RIGHT. YET DESPITE

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THESE HABITS THE POLITICAL REFORM PROGRAM THAT THE POPULAR

SOCIALIST PARTY (PSP) LEADER HAS LONG ESPOUSED IS, IN OUR VIEW, PARADOXICALLY MODERATE IN CONTENT. SEE, FOR EXAMPLE, BEIRUT 11197 OUTLINING HIS PROPOSALS MADE PUBLIC LAST AUGUST SHORTLY BEFORE ROUND 4. ESSENTIALLY THIS SAME PACKAGE FORMED THE BASIS OF HIS SUBMISSION TO THE "NATIONAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE" IN LATE SEPTEMBER ON BEHALF OF THE LEFT (BEIRUT 12085).

3. ON NOV. 19 JUMBLATT REMINDED US OF HIS PROGRAM'S INHERENT REASONABLENESS WHEN HE REACTED PUBLICLY TO PREMIER KARAME'S LATEST CONSTITUTIONAL IDEAS (BEIRUT 14426). HE WENT INTO CONSIDERABLE DETAIL ON HIS ELECTORAL REFORM PROGRAM, WITH WHICH HE HAS LONG BEEN IDENTIFIED AND TO WHICH HE OBVIOUSLY ATTACHES SIGNIFICANCE. MAIN POINTS ARE:

- (I) MAKING ALL LEBANON ONE ELECTORAL DISTRICT;
- (B) ADOPTING PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION AMONG COMPETING PARTIES, NONE OF WHICH WOULD BE RELIGIOUS IN BASIS, AT AVERAGE OF ONE DEPUTY FOR EACH 10,000 VOTERS;
- (C) LOWERING VOTING AGE FROM 21 YEARS TO 18 YEARS;
- (D) ALLOWING FREE AND EQUAL USE OF OFFICIAL MEDIA IN CAMPAIGNS;
- (E) MAKING ELECTORAL BRIBERY A CRIME PUNISHABLE BY LAW;
- (F) CREATING A JUDICIAL COMMITTEE FOR ELECTION COMPLAINTS;
- (G) CANCELLING THE DEPOSIT OF LL 3,000 REQUIRED FROM EACH CANDIDATE (WHO MUST WIN A CERTAIN PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTE OR LOSE THE DEPOSIT);
- (H) AMENDING THE PARLIAMENT STATUTE TO ENCOURAGE THE CREATION OF PARLIAMENTARY BLOCS;
- (I) FIXING A RETIREMENT AGE FOR DEPUTIES;
- (J) SPECIFYING THAT CANDIDATES FOR PARLIAMENT CANNOT EARN OVER LL 50,000 A YEAR, CANNOT BE CHAIRMAN OF BOARD OR DIRECTOR OF A COMPANY, AND CANNOT IF ELECTED HOLD ANY OTHER JOB THAN THAT OF DEPUTY.

4. JUMBLATT ALSO RESTATED IN MORE GENERAL TERMS OTHER BASIC CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS TO WHICH HE HAS ADHERED, INCLUDING:

(A) ESTABLISHING A "COUNCIL ON BASIC LEBANESE ACTIV-
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ITIES". THOUGH ITS DIMENSIONS ARE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR, THIS BODY EVIDENTLY WOULD COMPRISE A SECOND HOUSE OF A BICAMERAL LEGISLATURE, SHARING SOME BUT NOT ALL FUNCTIONS WITH THE PRESENT CHAMBERS OF DEPUTIES. CONSISTING OF A SUGGESTED 120 MEMBERS, THIS COUNCIL WOULD REPRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS. THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES WOULD ALSO BE RAISED TO 120 MEMBERS;

(B) SEPARATING LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCHES BY

RULING THAT MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT CANNOT BECOME MINISTERS;
(C) MAKING THE JUDICIARY COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT;
(D) REDUCING THE PRESIDENT'S POWER FOR EXAMPLE BY
LIMITING THE PRESIDENT'S POWER TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT.

5. ALTHOUGH ONE CAN QUARREL WITH ONE OR MORE OF THE
ABOVE IDEAS -- AND INDEED CHRISTIAN RIGHTISTS HAVE LEGIT-
IMATE ARGUMENTS AGAINST SOME OF THEM -- IN GENERAL THEY
CAN HARDLY BE CALLED EXTREME EXCEPT IN THE PECULIAR CON-
TEXT OF LEBANESE POLITICS. THEY COULD AT LEAST FORM A
BASIS FOR DISCUSSION AMONG MODERATES, AND IF RESPONDED TO
CONSTRUCTIVELY MIGHT CONCEIVABLY NUDGE JUMBLATT FROM THE
HOSTILE POSTURE THAT NOW CHARACTERIZES HIS PUBLIC IMAGE
VIA-A-VIS THE RIGHTISTS. HE MIGHT THEN CARRY SOME OF HIS
LEFTIST GROUP WITH HIM, LEAVING THE REAL RADICALS MORE OR
LESS ISOLATED ON THE EXTREME FRINGE. ONE HOPES THIS POS-
SIBILITY WILL DOWN ON MODERATE CHRISTIANS SOMEDAY.
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